(a) whether Britain had framed stricter new immigration rules which came into effect on 1st October, 1994;

(b) whether visitors from the Indian subcontinent have particularly been adversely affected by them;

(c) if so, whether Government have taken any initiative to persuade the British Government to suitably modify their immigration rules so that the interests of the Indian immigrants are not harmed in any way; if so, the outcome thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED): (a) Government are aware of a document entitled "Statement of changes in Immigration Rules" issued by the British Home Office which consolidates regulations relating to "control before entry" and "control after entry" and came into effect from 1 October, 1994. The only significant changes in British Immigration Rules flow from the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Legislation passed by the British Parliament which came into effect from 26 July, 1993. Under this Legislation, the right of appeal against refusal of visa for short term visitors (upto six months) and prospective students and their dependants was withdrawn. The right of appeal for long term visitors and those applying to settle in the UK remains in force. The Legislation also provides for speedier disposal of Asylum cases to be able to identify unfounded applications and fraudulent cases.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d) Our concerns regarding these new regulations were projected at various levels to the British authorities in 1992 and 1993. Government have been assured that the UK has no desire to restrict the number of visitors or students entering that country and that the provisions of the new regulations will have no effect on the grant of visas to bonafide short term visitors and students from India to the UK. The British authorities have introduced procedures to maintain and reinforce the fairness of the decision making process at their diplomatic missions.

Nuclear Threat from China

2221. SHRI O. P. KOHLI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether China had conducted its 41st nuclear test at Lopnor in Xinjiang in October, 1994;

(b) whether China intends to refine and modernise its arsenal inspite of the nuclear test moratorium observed by the other four nuclear weapon powers;

(c) whether China has more than 300 nuclear weapons of which only 28 can reach the U.S. and the rest can only pose a threat to countries in China's neighbourhood: and

(d) if so, the measures taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to update its nuclear technology to counter any probable nuclear threat from any country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): Yes, Sir.

(b) Reports from China and elsewhere indicate that China is engaged in modernising its nuclear arsenal;

(c) Government cannot confirm the exact number of nuclear weapons that China posseses;

(d) Government keep under constant review all developments which have a bearing on the country's security and take the appropriate measures required.

Bangladeshi Organisations send Terrorists to Kashmir

2222. SHRI RAJNI RANJAN SAHU: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the activities of some organisations in Bangladesh which propose to send nearly 3,000 persons as terrorists to Kashmir;

(b) whether Government have taken up the matter with Government of Bangladesh; if so, the outcome thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) to (c) Government have seen press reports to this effect and continue to remain vigilant in the matter.

Time limit for Issuance of Passports

2223. SYED SIBTEY RAZI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether passports to Indian Nationals are issued within some specified time limit in such cases where Character Verification Certificates issued by authorised officials of State and Central Government;

(b) if so, details thereof;

(c) whether such requests are subjected to any Police Verification;

(d) if so, details thereof with reasons for doubting the integrity of officials of Government despite being authorised;

(e) whether Government propose to do away the practice of Police Verification in cases where Character Verification Certificate issued by authorised official on his letterpad is enclosed; and

(f) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A short validity passport is issued to an applicant on the basis of a Character Verification Certificate issued by authorised officials of State and Central Government when the applicant has submitted documentary proof of urgency for travel abroad.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) All such applications are subjected to ex-post facto Police Verification. If adverse Police report is received, a letter is written to the officer concerned asking for an explanation. The matter is also referred to the Home Department of the State concerned for taking action as deemed fit.

(e) No, Sir.

(f) Police Verification is an essential step in the process of issuance of a passport.

OIC's Efforts to serve the right of Self-Determination of Kashmiris

2224. SHRI JAGMOHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the 51-nation Organisation of Islamic Countries have resolved to intensify efforts to "serve the right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir";

(b) whether the OIC have set up a "contact group" comprising Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Nigeria and Morocco for this purpose;

(c) whether Government have made or propose to make it clear to the nations of the "contact group" that it consider their membership of the group and activities of the groups as unfriendly acts; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) and (b) Seventh Extraordinary Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held at Islamabad on September 7—9 1994 had decided to set up an OIC 'Contact Group' on Jammu and Kashmir at the United Nations in New York, "to coordinate the efforts of Member States for promoting the right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people in accordance with the Resolutions and for safeguarding their fundamental human rights." The OIC 'Contact Group' on Jammu and Kashmir at the United Nations comprising of Niger, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the OIC Secretary General was subsequently established.

(c) and (d) The Government has conveyed India's views on the OIC Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir appropriately to its Members.

Indo-Pak clash over Kashmir at UN

2225. SHRI HIPHEI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether clash between India and Pakistan over Kashmir in United Nations has been reported in recent past;

(b) if so, details thereof;

(c) whether Government have time and again repeated that Kashmir is an integral part of India in all International Conferences;

(d) if so, reasons for allowing Pakistan to raise the issue again and again in each International Conference/Meet;

(e) whether Government propose to boycott such Conferences in future where Pakistan raises or allowed to raise "Kashmir Issue"; and

(f) if so, details thereof and if not, reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Pakistan has attacked India in several statements at the current UN General Assembly.

(c) Yes, Sir;

(d) The rules of procedure of UN bodies permit member-States to make references to any issues they wish;

(e) No, Sir.

(f) International conferences, including those at the UN, consider issues of vital importance to India, and Government's absence would mean that the Indian case, including on Kashmir, would go by default.

Statement by the U.S. Ambassador to India on Indo-Pak dispute over Kashmir

2226. SHRI HIPHEI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of Government has been drawn to a statement made by the U.S. Ambassador to India at Washington ruling out third party intercession in the Indo-Pak dispute over Kashmir;